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ON THE MORAL TRAINING OF CHILDREN.

YESTERDAY a mother watched a babe of eleven weeks. The child's hands and feet gyrated in slow, angular motions; her breath came and went in sobs; her eyes were fixed upon a bright, red book held straight in front of her; and she quivered with a spasm of reflexes at the loud striking of a clock uncontrolled on the mantelpiece behind her. She had wakened very much as a shark comes to the surface to breathe, most of her life being spent deep in the ocean of sleep. Her fingers and toes gripped tight around my cool finger; she turned her head at the sound of her father's voice; and her face became a sudden wrinkle as she wailed for food. What powerful intercostals! Otherwise, what helpless lack of co-ordination and utter plasticity!

Let us ask ourselves how this non-moral organism is to become moral, that is, active in the institutions of society. One recalls the view of man as the subject of a distant Law-Giver whose will is written on the tablets of the heart; and one part of the old conception lingers before the mind after the rest has disappeared, viz., the part of self-judgment and self-control. High over all sits the sovereign Lord, holding man inexcusable for any failure to know and conform to his will; just before us waits the judgment day, when each shall be rated according to his deeds; and in the wide, white silence of that awful morn, no matter what doubt and confusion may have existed before, each shall judge himself aright, and call to the rocks to fall on him and hide him from the face of Him that sitteth upon the throne.

Today we know that the moral law is as much the achievement as it is the judge of man; that the will is bound by no law which it has not imposed upon itself; and that the sovereign Source of law is not a distant king and judge, but our father, brother, and friend. No mere code of morality can be devised in which the principles do not conflict with each other, so that in obeying one we are at times certain to disobey another. Moreover, mere rules seldom fit the exigencies of the concrete situa-

tions in the midst of which men find themselves. Moral judgments are neither innate nor externally revealed; each must judge the present situation for himself; and morality is a continuous process of revamping old habits into more and more adequate adjustment to the conditions of life. Morality is the control of action by an increasingly adequate image of one's personality and one's place in the institutions of society and in the world. Moral training is, consequently, no simple process of laying down rules and forcing children by authority and by punishment to conform. It is rather the task of nursing into existence a will which lays down rules for itself and conforms itself to its rules; the task of developing self-control in beings born without inhibitions.

It is the function of images, or the cortical processes which accompany them, to co-ordinate, inhibit, and guide the activities of the lower-lying centers of the central nervous system. Motor control is a function of the system of images which one entertains of himself and his world. The image is the first step in action, the initiation of conduct, the determining factor in morals. Too little emphasis is placed, as a rule, upon the motor value of the image. Most people think that images float free and disconnected in the mind, like birds and clouds in the sky. The fact is, every image affects the muscular systems of the body and, consciously or unconsciously, produces movement; while, on the other hand, all control of movement begins with images of movement or its consequences. It is one of the popular illusions of mankind, old and young, that they can entertain ideas in the mind without allowing them to affect conduct. The child's chance of controlling his activities in life consists simply in the possibility of selecting and determining, under the guidance of parents and teachers, his mental imagery.

Present images depend upon past sensory experience, and upon the present conditions of the nervous system as determined by incoming impulses from the sense-organs, by nutrition, by intracranial conditions, and by intracortical processes. Past sensory experience, on the other hand, was the result of action; and present images are improved as to definiteness of detail and vividness of sense-quality by being carried out in action. To

train the imagination, not only is it necessary to provide a rich and varied sensory experience, but children must be encouraged to carry out their images in play, in story-telling, in drawing, in question-asking, etc. Images not only control actions; they result from actions. Images grow out of the past and present activities, and constitute the first steps toward further activities. In general, the results of an action determine what the motor value of the idea of that action shall be.

By far the most important of all images, from the moral point of view, is the self-judgment or self-thought—the reflective consciousness of self. No factor of the mental life is higher in authority to inhibit, co-ordinate, and guide. The ideas which a child has of the relations of his own body to the rest of the world, his ideas of the relation between his own activities and the family, the school, and the neighborhood of which he counts himself a part, and his ideas of the bearing of his life (when he acquires them) upon the life of the race—the child's ideas of these relationships are the keys to his moral experience. Baldwin distinguishes four stages in the development of morality: first, the non-moral stage of the infant, when no self-thought exists; second, the stage of authority based upon imitation, with or without understanding; third, a stage in which relationships of right and duty are standardized by instruction and reflection; fourth, the religious stage, in which the ideal self becomes an object of worship, the source of moral law, and the mystery of mysteries. Moral training is the socialization of the child, making him active in the institutions of society. Our theme, accordingly, suggests three questions: first, the child's hereditary equipment for entrance into social life; second, the principles upon which the socialization process is based; third, the media of moral training.

First, every normal child inherits from the past a system of bodily organs capable of impulse and reflex action. Even before birth such activities occur. He also inherits instincts, that is, tendencies to action which are common to the race, are provided with special organs, and tend to meet the needs and satisfy the conditions of life before a consciousness of needs and conditions is present. Among the impulsive tendencies of the child we find

a complete socio-nomic equipment. The child is born sensitive to the presence of others, eager for comradeship, quick to show his sympathy with others' suffering; and he is also born with an impulsive tendency to carry out in action the ideas of movement derived from his own past movements, and from the words, the conduct, and the attitudes of others. Such is his nature that, for no reason which he can give himself, he is uneasy and uncomfortable until he has done what he knows others expect him to do and what harmonizes with his own past. All children are suggestible, that is, teachable; and thus nature provides for the development of inhibitions and moral control.

The first form of control to be attained by the child is muscular, depending upon the development of the cortex and the sense-organs. Muscular control is a natural growth, and the most important thing for teachers and parents to do is to see that no obstacles are imposed upon nature, such as tight swathing, carrying the child upon one arm tight against the nurse's breast, impure air and food, tardy and careless attendance, etc. There is some danger of injuring the child by trying to force the development of muscular control. Even in the tender months of infancy parents are discouraged when a baby does not show precocity in sitting up, holding up its head, in reaching and grasping, in walking, and in other motor co-ordinations. This should not be. Above all, babies should not be persistently teased during the first five or six months to notice bright lights and colors and carry out fundamental co-ordinations. But the foundations of moral control are laid in muscular control; and all through life the complete mastery of the body, such as athletic training and industrial skill develop, is one of the important conditions of moral control. For a child to know that he *can* do things, that he can achieve desirable results with his own hands, feet, and body, is without any doubt a great moral advantage. Herein lies the moral significance of manual training and interscholastic athletics. It is not necessary to dwell at length upon the oft-mentioned evils of that type of muscular training which involves close attention to minute details before the larger muscles and coarser co-ordinations have been trained. Muscular training should proceed from

the coarse to the fine, from whole-arm to finger movements, from easy exercises in skipping, hopping, and jumping to more delicate dance movements. Of course, there can be muscular control without moral control, and there may be moral control in individuals who are lacking in capacity for muscular movement; but it is probably not possible for individuals possessing great muscular capability to reach the highest planes of moral achievement possible to them, without mastering their own energies. In other words, it is *control* that possesses moral significance, not strength and competitive ability.

Authoritative control is accomplished by suggestion and achieved on the child's part by imitation. As it appeals to imitation, and not to the understanding, authoritative control is not moral; but, like muscular control, it is one of the conditions of entrance into moral experience. Children are naturally amenable to the dictation of authority. From a child's point of view, authority is a special kind of suggestion; but the only authority which can be real to him must be effective. That is to say, parents and teachers who do their best for children will see to it that their suggestions are carried out. Of course, no one at the present day holds that "punishing" children is an administration of justice; and, of course, authority which breaks instead of training young impulses is criminally stupid. What Stevenson calls the "fine wildings" of a child's nature, his unconventional tendencies, his firm native grip upon freedom, are among his most precious moral possessions. Other things being equal, the more spontaneity and freedom the grown-up man possesses, the greater will be his moral initiative and usefulness to society.

The child's imitative endeavors to understand the conduct of those around him by reading himself into their actions, and his attempts to understand himself by doing what he sees them do, slowly develop in him a consciousness of personality and an idea of the difference between a self and all other things. His sense of agency manifests itself in waywardness and adds to the natural insubordination of impulse. But while he is running away from home and destroying his toys, he is at the same time learning the lesson of moral control and obedience: he struggles with himself

and becomes dimly aware of the scale of personal values. Very frequently the consciousness of a self which always obeys, a morally perfect self, results from a conflict with the authority of parent or teacher; and undoubtedly a wise exercise of authority is one of the most potent agencies in the development of a moral sense. When once the ideal self has been realized, a moral dualism ever afterward characterizes his self-thought. There is the retrospective self of habit, a familiar self of disobedience, discipline, and hard-won obedience; and, on the other hand, there is the prospective self of still unattained and even, in some respects, undefined perfection. Out of this dualism arises ultimately a religious thought of self, as the subject of an eternal authority, which is one of the most important factors in the development of the natural religious consciousness. In this sense of the term, every child sooner or later comes to be religious.

What interests us especially here is the control value of this self-judgment. A child's experience is never strictly moral until the personal image has become a factor in the control of his movements. Teachers should know how to recognize this exercise of self-judgment and encourage children to act upon their judgments of themselves. They should acquire habits of absolute honesty in self-judgment, and come to hate self-deception more than any other form of illusion or mistake. Is it too much to hope that the boy and girl of eight or ten years shall begin to know the great value of honest and adequate self-judgments, the full realization of which rarely comes before the age of thirty years? Surely children may become acquainted with the fact that we like to think well of ourselves and have others think well of us; and surely they can be warned against, and trained to inhibit, all forms of hypocrisy and misrepresentation of self — those most insidious and inveterate foes of honest self-judgment and self-control. Another condition of accurate self-knowledge is good company, good manners, good literature, and good conversation. A child cares more for the judgment of those whom he respects than for the judgments of any transcendent being or beings whom he has never seen. *Vox populi, vox dei*, is good child-psychology, but bad ontology. The child's judgments of himself

depend upon the judgments which the chosen companions and advisors of his heart, those whom he associates with himself in his self-thought, pass upon him. How important it is that the intimate companions of his life be good! The old adage, "Tell me what company you keep and I will tell you what you are," conveys, if we understand by "company" those whom one associates with himself in his thought of himself, much truth.

As to the principles of moral training, we should refer again to the cultivation of muscular control through images and language. Language, imitatively acquired, is one of the most important media of moral training. In mastering the meanings and uses of words, a child acquires knowledge of moral relationships; and, having mastered words, they come to be suggestive to his imitative nature. Secondly, self-control is secured by exalting and focalizing the active consciousness. Children should be especially encouraged in activities involving the adaptation of means to definite ends. The moral will demands the habit of accomplishing *definite* tasks as its proper setting and background. Not mere industry, not mere business, but intentness upon the accomplishment of worthy undertakings, carries with it truthfulness and sincerity. Industry in the sense of mere muscular doing is of but little value in moral training, and the danger of stunting a child's more remote interests by it is great. We hold that the active consciousness should be made to dominate the character of the child, and that the habit of accomplishing definite tasks—that is, tasks which grow out of the child's own experience and have been defined by him—should be in every way encouraged by his teachers and parents. This active habit in a child leads to truthfulness and honesty of judgment. There is, however, a danger that children will become so intent upon action that they will be impatient of reflection and mature judgment—what Professor James calls the explosive will. And yet, even the explosive will may, by being encouraged to undertake *definite* tasks of increasing difficulty, overcome its bird-wittedness.

The danger of too great devotion of the energies to action, the danger of explosiveness, is overcome, in the third place, by enriching and informing a child's interests so that he becomes

more open and receptive toward his environment and more eager to take in all sides of a thing before acting toward it. Habits of observation are, of course, invaluable in the training of the intellect, but they have their place also in the development of character. That a child should hesitate before deciding a matter is desirable, just so he does not hesitate too long. The obstructed will is as ineffectual as the explosive; and it is not necessary to repeat here the practical suggestions offered by the psychologists as to methods of dealing with these two types.

The fourth principle of moral training is authority — insistence upon the recognition of the necessary relationships of co-ordination and subordination within the institutions of society. Moral instruction should not be overlooked in the catalogue of the principles of moral training. Relationships of right, and the laws of conduct based upon them, need to be defined and standardized for children, to clinch the habits which they have formed and to aid them in forming others. But it needs to be remembered in this connection that morality is moralization, that moral training is a continual process of re-forming good habits as well as inhibiting bad ones. One also needs to remember, when giving moral instruction, the general relation of images to action. Images should grow out of the child's past actions and initiate present action. In other words, moral instruction which does not give the *child* a new and better idea of himself and his child's world will not avail. Perhaps one of the most serious faults of the present methods of moral instruction is their *ex cathedra* character. Moral injunctions are apt to come to children like bolts from the blue which they are left to connect as best they can with their own experience. Such connections are for the child too often purely external and accidental, as the precepts are in no sense imposed by the child's will upon himself. As a result of such moral instruction, too often, the child yields an external compliance while secretly indulging habits more in accord with his own ideals. This is the natural consequence of the older conception of morality as of supernatural origin and of *a priori* validity. Child-will, like the adult will, naturally acknowledges no moral compulsion which is not self-imposed. Moral instruction must be based upon the *child's* past experience.

We would also mention the value of attitudes and exercises which recognize the essential unity of all experience—religious attitudes. Not that religious training is a special kind of training, or that religious exercises fall in a group by themselves. Far from it. All principles of moral training are religious in so far as they are based upon and recognized as a unity of all experience; and little folks should be made to feel that the significance of their conduct reaches beyond the present situation into a realm which the understanding cannot always penetrate. Most children should be encouraged to do what they *feel* to be right, and such feelings naturally lead to conceptions of a religious nature.

A few words may now be added on the means of moral training offered by the schools. In the first place, science in all of its branches may be made a means of training truthfulness, and exactness of observation. In the natural sciences truth to fact is an obvious condition of successful procedure. In the historical and social sciences the lessons of morality are teachable without explicit ethical comment. In literature the same thing is possible; and in all the sciences the child's knowledge of himself should be so enriched and defined as to make his self-judgments more intelligent and his self-control more complete. For example, what an opportunity the biological and social sciences, together, afford for inculcating a wholesome respect for the relationships of the family, and what a wealth of motor images the literature of childhood and youth affords! Manual training, in all forms, instructs and trains children in the adaptation of means to ends, and in the necessity of truthful exactness and accuracy; in short, the value of good judgment. Moreover, manual training brings out and emphasizes the importance of definiteness in the tasks and undertakings of life and tends to develop the habit of pursuing definite ends. How pitiable is the man possessing noble capabilities, eager to work and competent to perform, impotently waiting for someone to define his tasks for him! One knows of many such men. Their imaginations are filled with vague and remote dreams of desirable ends which, from mere lack of definition, they are unable to set about realizing. Indeed, this is the common fault of the idealisms of adolescence. Manual training may be invaluable as a means of correcting this fault.

The third means of moral training to be mentioned here is the organization and *esprit de corps* of the school, the home, and the playground. One does not like the terms "school government" and "home government" because of their associations. But the necessary discipline of the individual child, wherever many unite in the realization of common tasks, is of great importance in moral training. Not politeness so much as good manners should be the aim — kindness in the sense of kinnedness, cheerfulness with serenity, geniality, magnanimity, respect for age and authority, charity. In recitations all tendency to deceive by stabbing and bluffing should be overcome; but it is first necessary to awaken interest and overcome the natural timidity and shyness of children. That a child should, out of timidity or a wish to protect thoughts that are dear to him, fear to express himself, is always to be deplored. The socialization of the school and home should be carried so far as to make such things unheard of.

In the fourth place, music and gymnastics, so highly prized of old, contribute to the sense of harmony and a delight in unified activity. Muscular control of the finest quality and inhibitions of social importance are thus achieved. But perhaps games and play contribute as much to the moral training of boys and girls as all of the above factors combined. Play, like morality, is autotelic — carried on for its own sake. Play involves, very frequently, the imitative realization of an imaginative situation, and in this respect also resembles moral performance. Many plays are imitative of real social situations and involve the dramatic element of make-believe. Play is invaluable as a method of imitative experimentation in social experience. Children try on the preaching situation, the fire-department experience, the management of trains, the nursing and disciplining of children, each following his rôle and getting the experience he is entitled to under the rules of the game. Social fitness plays a considerable part in children's games. One boy cannot preach because he is such a liar, and another cannot be the engineer on the train of chairs because he broke his own engine the day before. Plays are adapted to the resources and circumstances at hand. Tests of social fitness are also brought out in games; stupidity and clumsi-

ness are sure to be pointed out with childish frankness. Self-control on the part of the individual, the inhibition of impulses, confining himself to his rôle and the dictates of fair play, is an outcome of play. Moreover, social invention is here in great demand and constantly exercised. In all these respects, a child learns to judge himself and others. Wherever teachers, as a result of tact and sympathy, find it possible to enter into the games and plays of children, they may exercise a potent moral influence.

The last means of moral training to be mentioned here is the personal influence of the teacher. By right living and self-control, by cheerfulness and devotion, she helps to develop her virtues in her flock. The imitations of children go deeper than the external word and act; the latter carry with them the moods and motor attitudes which they "express"; and far more is often accomplished with boys and girls by the silent personal influence of a teacher than could be accomplished in other ways. Indeed, this influence is indispensable; it alone gives point and definite meaning to the other forms of moral training.

Before closing this paper, some common mistakes in moral training should be mentioned. The submissive and bumptious types are common enough; but it is more necessary to call attention to the over-trained and under-trained products. The firm, polite, obliterated personalities which result from over-training are no less to be deplored than the crude, naïve, self-assertive characters of the opposite sort. Little girls of such exaggerated conscientiousness that they accomplish nothing — all their timidities turned to moral qualms; and men of thirty years so painfully polite and ashamed of their natural impulses that they are incapable of initiating and leading any social undertaking. It is the "staleness" of an overtrained athlete. Be the circumstances what they may, nothing but inhibitions come into their minds when called upon to act. Let us have the blundering greenness of good-natured impulses rather than this gray heaven of second thought and inhibition. There is hope for greenness and gullibility in an environment of culture. The only absolute duffers in the moral world are self-constituted. Let youth be trained, but not defeated; bent perhaps, but not broken. The impulses of child-

hood must be controlled by adequate judgments of the relationships of the individual to other individuals within the institutions of society; but the inhibitions of action should grow out of the situations which give rise to action, perception and judgment being so trained that the situations call for no immoral response.

Of criminals it is best to say very little or very much. Only a small percentage of criminals are born defective. In some cases society has placed such environments about children and youths that they grow up to think of felony, and even murder, as a country boy thinks of hunting squirrels or trapping bear. Dare we hope for a time when all the influences that play upon the minds of children shall be socializing?

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